

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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COUNTRY	USSR (Latvian SSR)	REPORT	
SUBJECT	Living Conditions in Lepaya and Riga	DATE DISTR.	30 June 1953
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This is UNEVALUATED Information

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

Private Ownership of Automobiles

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1. In Latvia, everyone is permitted to own an automobile, regardless of his station in life. A Moskvich auto costs 9,000 rubles and a Pobeda, 16,000 rubles. Tires (Moskvitsa) cost 200 rubles each, but one can get them only on the black market, where one must pay 350 rubles per tire. The life of a tire is estimated at 21,000 kilometers. Auto purchases usually are made through the place of employment, since it is difficult to get an auto in the State stores; State stores seldom have autos for sale. Private buyers must pay the entire purchase price in cash, because credit is extended only to official institutions. However, when the car is purchased on credit, it costs twice as much as a cash purchase.

2. To obtain a driver's license, one must put in an application to the local auto inspection section of the MGB. There one must pass an examination on one's knowledge of the driving regulations and aptitude for driving a car.

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3. Officially, gasoline costs 2.40 rubles a liter, but it cannot be obtained at filling stations. All private car owners buy gasoline on the black market, where sailors sell it for 1 ruble a liter; it is also possible to purchase gasoline coupons from chauffeurs for 1 to 1.50 rubles a liter. Gasoline is not rationed, but it is not obtainable through official channels. There is no official restriction as to the categories of people which may purchase gasoline.

4. Private automobile owners are permitted to transport only persons in their families. However, a person is permitted to drive on all roads inside and outside Latvia without special permission.

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(Note: Washington Distribution Indicated By "X"; Field Distribution By "#.")

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Home Ownership

5. The ownership of houses by individuals is limited to small villas and one-family houses. Houses in which rooms are rented may not be owned privately.¹ It is possible to buy one-family houses or to build for oneself.

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the private houses in Lepaya are not concentrated in a certain part of the city, but are scattered around the city, mostly around the fringe of the city.

Anti-Semitism

6. There are no official restrictions on Jews in Latvia. Anti-Semitism, originating mostly with the Soviets, finds expression only through occasional remarks, and even these are not made openly. Persecutions of the Jews or demonstrations against them have not occurred. After the arrest of the doctors in Moscow, in January 1953, became known, a nervousness could be observed among the Jews; for they obviously feared an anti-Semitic turn in Moscow policies.

Tobacco Products

7. The most popular type of cigarette is the papiross, the favorite brand being "Sport", because it is cheapest, costing 2.80 rubles for a pack of twenty. The most expensive cigarette is "Kasbek", which costs 4.00 or 4.50 rubles a pack and is smoked only by those who are well off. Thus, it is smoked mostly by Soviets. Papirossi can be purchased in all stores, by the pack, but not singly. Cigarettes are not seen often and were never popular in Latvia.
8. Loose tobacco is used very little, since one cannot get paper to make cigarettes. Makhorka is the only type which is smoked, chiefly by the Soviet soldiers, sailors, and workers, who roll this tobacco in newspaper. Although cigarette paper can be obtained, the Soviets prefer newspaper, since it is cheaper and suits the Soviet taste. Makhorka is issued free of charge to sailors, on board ship and in quarters. Pipe tobacco is smoked very little, and home-grown tobacco is used hardly at all, since there is no shortage of tobacco.²

Clothing

9. Used clothing can be purchased in the commission stores, of which there are three in Lepaya. There are also speculators who sell clothing clandestinely on the streets. The prices vary greatly, with a man's suit costing about 1,200 to 1,300 rubles; a pair of shoes, 300 to 400 rubles, and a karakul fur coat; 9,000 rubles. Clothing, cloth, and shoes are not rationed. It was not noted that different population groups wear special clothing, although those who can afford it usually are better dressed than others.
10. There are still a few independent tailors and shoemakers who do private work. However, the situation in this respect is worse in the rural areas than in the cities. It takes two to three days to have shoes half-soled. The customer must provide the soles. Leather half soles have almost disappeared from the market and cost about twenty rubles a pair. Therefore, people use rubber soles which they make from old automobile tires. Wooden soles are not used, nor metal plates used to half-sole shoes. There are some bootblacks on the streets in Riga, but none in Lepaya. There are no more transient vendors of shoe polish and shoelaces.
11. Uniforms are worn by railroad employees, firemen, and streetcar drivers and conductors. Neither school pupils nor students of higher educational institutions wear uniforms.



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1.  Comment. It is known that rooms in private homes are quite often rented on a long- or short-term basis. It will be noted that almost every paragraph of this report contains some slight inconsistency or odd logic. 

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2.



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